

All so simple as Wycombe wilt

Aylesbury United 2
Wycombe Wanderers 1

WHISPER it quietly, but United are in with a marvellous chance of going one better than last season's losing final appearance in the Berks and Bucks Senior Cup.

Tuesday night saw them dispose of arguably the strongest side in the competition, and if any notice is to be taken of that strange thing called logic, only Slough should really be fancied to stay with them.

There was no element of fluke about this second round win. Having come within two minutes of finishing the tie at Loakes Park, Leo Markham's side beat Wanderers rather more comprehensively than the score suggests.

I was at a total loss to understand the Isthmian League Club's second half tactics.

Having been 2-1 down after a thrilling first half, the ball was very much in their court to try and do something about it. Yet United keeper Keith Baker had just one early shot to save before a much improved referee, Mr. R. E. Chaffer, blew the final whistle bang on time.

At the other end of the pitch, they seemed more intent on playing the boring old offside trap than getting possession and setting up attacks.

Be it Liverpool or the local works side, I've got no time for teams who play the cavalry charge offside game.

The win means that United now face Burnham at home in the quarter finals, and although they struggled to beat the same side in the FA Cup earlier this season, they should be good enough for a semi-final place. Here's hoping.

The first half of Tuesday's game was one of the most exciting periods of football I've seen in a very long time. It even surpassed some of the Barnet thrills.

Billy Holmes, who looked so much sharper than of late, forced Gary

Lester to a good diving save after just three minutes, and no sooner had the corner been scrambled clear than Tony Price made a break and Bobby Dell's shot tested Baker.

Price once again looked impressive, but he didn't have it all his own way as Kevin Tilley and Mick Martin in particular had magnificent games.

A goal was always on the slate from the start and it arrived United's way after just nine minutes. Holmes was involved at the start, Tilley crossed and there was Markham to tuck it past Lester for his first goal of the season.

United's player-boss has had some wretched luck in front of goal this year. It was no bad game in which to rediscover his scoring touch and that all-important bit of luck.

Having got the lead, United looked like they wanted shot of it straight away. Price's shot was tipped over and when the same player took a swerving corner, Steve Hardwick nodded on and

although Baker made one terrific stop, he couldn't prevent Steve Long adding the finishing touch. 11 minutes, and 1-1 the score.

Price was on forward manoeuvres again, but it was Gary Harthill who was next to show with a shot well over on the turn after Martin had won the ball, and good work by Lester to foil the little 'un when Holmes' cross forced a mistake at the back.

Both Holmes and Harthill badly need a goal, but at least no one could accuse them of not giving good value in this one.

Markham it was who worked the oracle again after 21 minutes. Dave O'Reilly, who only came to full life later on in the game, turned the ball back and Markham trundled it in past Lester to another roar from the big crowd.

Baker was out to foil Mick Hollifield, and Wanderers might have been unlucky when a bit of pushing in the back allowed Price's effort to

go through untouched to Baker again.

Hardwick let go from fully 35 yards to keep the United 'keeper's fingers warm, and Baker then made a marvellous stop from Jimmy Jacobs' volley. Offside flag it may have been, but Parker wasn't to know.

One precision ball by Markham that just caught Harthill offside — pity, that — and we all trooped in for the half time cuppas to enthuse about a first half worth the entrance money alone.

It looked ominous for United when Price started the second half with a terrific shot from 25 yards that Baker beat away, but it flattered to deceive as United carved out the half's better chances.

Harthill should have scored after 49 minutes when he was clean through. But Lester stopped the shot well and Dave Parratt, coming in fast, shot over the top when he, too, should have netted.

Baker was quickly out to beat first Long and

then Glynn to promising passes, and after more offside rubbish from Wycombe, Chris Nash came on for Parratt, who played reasonably well but never saw very much of the ball.

Ken Wilson came on for Glynn. It was a strange decision to take off the leading scorer when a goal down in a do-or-die cup tie.

Dave Jones' idea for beating the offside trap was frustrated by obstruction, and then after 70 minutes, Markham had his obligatory foul on the 'keeper. Only three out of ten for violence this time as Lester stayed virtually upright.

O'Reilly, coming more into the game, had a shot well saved as both sides seemed to set their moves up down the left.

Nash could only come up with a grossly overhit pass when Harthill was half clear, and despite the late hour, Tilley was still buzzing up and down lending his considerable pace and authority to the attacks.

Harthill and Holmes combined well to give Jones a shot which Lester saved, and with three minutes left, Wycombe decided it might be a good idea to try and do something about being a goal behind.

Kennedy came on for Dell on 87 minutes, and the one real moment of panic came as United desperately tried to hack the ball clear from the morass of sand at the edge of the area. Paul Birdseye strode up but struck his shot just over the top.

The final whistle came with elation on the faces of those with memories of when United beating Wanderers would have seemed a fanciful dream. As for the players, I sensed not so much elation as satisfaction at a hard job well done and a reward well earned.

Team: Baker, Tilley, Mead, Martin, Markham, Jones, O'Reilly, Parratt, Jefferies, Holmes, Harthill. Subs. Youell and Nash.